

What is claimed is:

1. A method of manufacturing a metal gasket assembly, comprising:  
forming an annular grommet having a generally U-shaped cross-section defining a pair of axially spaced legs having outer axially opposite sealing surfaces spaced a predetermined distance apart when in an undeformed state corresponding to an initial thickness of the grommet which is greater than the thickness of the plate;  
installing the grommet in the opening of the plate; and  
wherein the grommet is fabricated of a heat-treatable ferrous-based metal material and is formed to the annular, U-shaped cross-sectional configuration when the grommet material is in a relatively soft, plastically deformable pre-heated condition, and where after forming, the grommet is subjected to a heat treatment to impart elasticity and strength properties to the grommet enabling the legs of the grommet to be compressed elastically under an axial compression load to a reduced thickness corresponding substantially to the thickness of the plate and to return to the initial thickness upon removal of the compressive load.
2. The method of claim 10 wherein the heat treatment step has an austemper heat treat cycle.
3. The method of claim 10 wherein the pair of legs are formed such that one of the legs is formed longer than the other leg.
4. The method of claim 10 further comprising applying a coating to the grommet after the heat treatment step.